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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: TAIWAN'S UN REFERENDA, DALAI LAMA AND
TIBETAN INDEPENDENCE

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage March 11 on the upcoming presidential poll and the UN referenda, on the televised policy discussion between the two vice presidential candidates Monday, and on the baseball game between Taiwan and Canada in the 2008 Final Olympic Qualifying Tournament in Taichung Monday. All local papers also reported on a Taiwan Central Election Commission announcement Monday saying that none of the presidential candidates or their running mates has either U.S. or Japanese nationality. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" urged the voters to cast their referendum ballots for Taiwan's UN membership. An editorial in the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post," on the other hand, discussed the Dalai Lama's recent call for a "middle path" of more autonomy for Tibet. The article said the Dalai Lama's call is a sensible one, as he knows more than anybody else that Tibetan independence is impossible. End summary.

¶2. Taiwan's UN Referenda

"Vote for Taiwan -- No One Should Be Absent from Casting the Referendum Ballots on [Taiwan's] UN Membership"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] editorialized (3/11):

"... It must be borne in mind that if the referenda to join or re-join the UN fail to pass [the threshold of percentage of voters] just because of external force, we will suffer intervention of [a similar] external force when we want to decide on our own destiny in the future. In particular, China will know the trick by then and will try harder to intervene. This is because the success in suppressing Taiwan's referenda this time will mislead ill-intentioned China to believe that the Taiwan people will abandon their insistence on Taiwan-centric values and let others do whatever they want to the island, as long as Beijing continues imposing pressure on Taiwan and the international community.

"Everyone must recognize clearly today that the success of the UN referenda will by no means indicate the success of any particular political party; rather, it is where Taiwan's destiny hinges. In substance, the move not to pick up the referendum ballots means that one is against Taiwan, not the referenda themselves. Once the KMT comes up with a bad decision of [calling on its supporters] not to pick up the referendum ballots, it will be akin to revealing [to the public] that it had deceived in proposing the referendum to re-join the UN, whereas its real intent was to oppose Taiwan. [Should this be the case,] the voters will reject the KMT with scorn -- a development that the KMT surely will not welcome.

"Externally speaking, the referenda to join or re-join the UN are aimed at expressing the Taiwan people's will to oppose China's annexation and to join the international community. Internally,

they are a major step to push for Taiwan becoming a normal country. It is safe to say that every Taiwan citizen has a responsibility as to whether the referenda will be passed. For the sake of Taiwan and our descendants, the ruling and opposition parties should rise beyond the thinking of antagonism, and all our people should stand on the high ground of history and recognize clearly the profound impact of the referendum results [on Taiwan]. As the masters of this country, we must try our best to carry out our mission and let our descendants be proud of our anti-annexation movement."

13. Dalai Lama and Tibetan Independence

"The Dalai Lama's Sensible Call"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (3/11):

"Over 100 Tibetan exiles in India started a march to their homeland yesterday, as part of protests marking the Dalai Lama's escape from capture by the Chinese in 1959. They hope to reach the undisclosed destination of their six-month trek in time to draw world attention to the Chinese occupation of Tibet as this year's Summer Olympics open in Beijing in August. They want independence, a total separation from China that asserted sovereignty over Tibet in 1720. The Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader who was forced into exile in Dharamsala in north India, has long distanced himself from calls for independence. He is pleading instead for a 'middle path' of more autonomy from China for Tibet. ... His is a sensible call. It is absolutely senseless to try the impossible. The Tibetans have worldwide support for independence, but they have to take the next best choice: the Dalai Lama's middle path. Taiwan's independence activists should look for a leader like the Dalai Lama."

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